



Childhood Connections

February 4, 2025

Spotlight on Office of Childhood Teams!

Throughout 2025, this newsletter will spotlight team members who work in the Office of Childhood (OOC) and their “why” for supporting children, families, and the professionals who work directly with them.



Erin Babb is the Program Manager of the Outreach section. She works with her team to implement local stakeholder engagement and outreach activities. She collaborates closely with office leaders to support the vision and goals of the office through strategic planning activities. Erin has worked in early childhood for 14 years. She started her career as an infant teacher in an early childhood center. Her “why” is driven from the desire to improve early childhood systems, making programs more accessible and easier to navigate for families and professionals.



Apurva Sunder is a Program Coordinator in the Outreach section. She works with the Resource and Referral Network, Childhood Community Leaders, Missouri Family Resources, Parent Advisory Council, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri. Apurva was a Montessori guide and a Parent Educator for 22 years and worked with families and children from birth through 12 years old. She is grateful for everything she has learned from the children, parents, and professionals she has met throughout her career. They are her "why" and she is committed to supporting them in her role with the Office of Childhood.



Courtney Hicks is a Program Coordinator in the Outreach section. She works closely with the OOC sections to implement an Outreach program for the office and its stakeholders. She also coordinates Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri. Courtney began her career at State Fair Community College. She worked in Higher Education for 10 years, before moving to the private sector and working in marketing. Her "why" comes from growing up in a rural community and seeing resources like free books, child care subsidy, home visiting, and other programs for children, make a significant difference.

NEW! Afterschool Grant Writing Workshop

OOC receives funding through the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) to support afterschool programs across the state. Those funds are made available through a competitive grant process. A grant-writing workshop will be held on February 14, 2025, to provide information about applying for the grant.

[Register for the workshop and learn more here.](#)



REMINDER! Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Webinar

The next CCDF State Plan webinar for stakeholders and child care providers will be Wednesday, February

For more information about afterschool programs, visit [the OOC Afterschool Programs webpage](#) or contact afterschool@dese.mo.gov.

NEW! Child Care Compliance & Regulation Data Dashboard

OOC's Child Care Compliance and Regulation sections created a new quarterly [data dashboard](#) to help promote the work being done in their sections. The first dashboard contains key data points from the fourth quarter of 2024.

This data dashboard gives information about the licensed and license-exempt child care landscape, including the number of regulated child care facilities, child care slots, pending facilities, inspection and complaint investigations, and time to get licensed.

At the end of each quarter throughout the year, a new dashboard will be posted on [the Child Care Compliance and Regulation Data Dashboard webpage](#).

UPDATE! Extended Timeline for Required Trainings for Child Care Subsidy

Due to recent enhancements to the Missouri Professional Development (MOPD) system, OOC is extending the timeline for completing the two new required trainings: (1) Missouri Milestones Matter with information about the five domains of childhood development, and (2) Caring for Vulnerable Children with information on homelessness and child abuse/neglect.

- Current child care staff members have until March 31, 2025, to complete these two additional trainings. OOC will begin checking for compliance with these trainings beginning April 1, 2025.
- New child care staff members hired on or after January 1, 2025, have 90 days from date of hire to complete required training, including these two new trainings.
- Both trainings are available in the MOPD system.

For assistance, contact mopd@dese.mo.gov or call 573-526-8273.

19, 2025, from 11:00 to 11:45 a.m.

Topics include updates on the CCDF State Plan, renewing a subsidy contract, eligibility for child care assistance, and training on the child care data system. You can [access the webinar](#) using a Google Chrome or Safari web browser. Do not view in Internet Explorer.

NEW! ECHO Autism Resources

[ECHO Autism Communities](#) is a virtual learning community for a variety of professionals who serve individuals on the Autism spectrum and their families. ECHO provides professional development focused on best practices for clinicians, health professionals, educators, and advocates.

Find behavioral, diagnostic, educational, family support, and medical condition resources by visiting [the ECHO Autism Resources webpage](#) and access [expert videos](#) as part of the ECHO Autism Communities.

ANNOUNCEMENT! Mental Health Consultation Now Available!

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is now available at no cost for child care professionals

ANNOUNCEMENT! MOPD System Training

Anyone using the MOPD system, including child care administrators and educators, can register for MOPD System Trainings. These trainings offer an introduction to the system and how to enhance your program and professional development strategies. Attendees who complete the training will earn two clock hours.

The training is available virtually and in person. Training times and dates are available on [the MOPD Training flyer](#).

Contact MOPD at 573-526-8273 or register by logging into your MOPD account.

NEW! OOC Strategic Plan Update

The OOC provided an update on Missouri's Childhood Strategic Plan at the January Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC) meeting. The update included reporting on 2024 activities and plans for 2025 activities. [The final 2024 Status Report: Access to Childhood Programs](#) and [2024 Strategic Plan Progress Report](#) are now available.

[The 2024 Office of Childhood Accomplishments](#) document highlights the biggest accomplishments of the year and celebrates progress towards OOC goals.

[The 2025 Strategic Plan Action Items](#) details the 38 action items OOC has planned across all four strategic plan goals, to be conducted throughout 2025.

NEW! Training Series for Professionals

A new free online training series on working with children who have experienced prenatal substance exposure and their families is now available. This six-part training series is specifically geared towards supporting home visitors in this often-challenging work.

In this training series professionals will learn about:

- Understanding parental substance use and implications for infants and young children

in licensed, registered, or regulated programs. Participants receive training on social-emotional child development, ongoing coaching, mentoring, access to supports, resources, and referrals.

Learn more on [the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative webpage](#).

ANNOUNCEMENT! Missouri Supporting Early Childhood Administrators (MO- SECA)

Early childhood administrators and family child care owners/operators can register for MOSECA to learn about effectively leading and operating sustainable, quality early childhood programs.

Virtual and academy style trainings are now available for dates in February and March 2025.

Learn more at [the MOSECA webpage](#).

UPDATE! Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

An updated dashboard and active child maps for the fourth quarter of 2024 can be found under Imagination Library Data on [the OOC Imagination Library webpage](#).

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is

- How substances influence and alter infant brain development
- Short-term health and developmental implications of prenatal substance exposure
- Longer-term effects of prenatal substance exposure on child development
- Strategies to promote infant recovery and child development
- The effects of trauma on infant development and child learning

View [the training series flyer](#) to register and learn more.

UPDATE! Regional Parent Advisory Councils Map

[Regional Parent Advisory Councils \(PACs\)](#) meet twice each year to gather parent feedback to help inform child-serving state systems. Three new regional PACs were established in Fall 2024, bringing the total to seven regional PACs across the state. Find their locations and contact information in this [Regional Parent Advisory Council document](#).

REMINDER! 1099 Forms

Child care providers who receive funding from the state will receive one 1099 form for child care payments in 2024 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This includes payments for child care relief funds, pre-kindergarten grants, one-time stipends, and child care subsidy.

- All 1099 forms have been mailed out as of January 31, 2025.
- If you have tax preparation questions about these funds, please consult your CPA or accountant. You can also review the Administration for Children and Families [federal relief funds FAQ](#).

REMINDER! Requirements For Licensed and Subsidy Child Care Providers

It is important to maintain a clean environment to protect the children receiving care from getting hurt or becoming ill.

Licensing rules and the Subsidy Provider Policy Manual require homes and facilities to be free of

available for every child ages birth to 5 years in Missouri. A parent or guardian can register their child on [the Imagination Library national webpage](#). Books will be mailed directly to the home of registered children at no cost to the family.

UPDATE! Childhood Community Leader Dashboard

[Childhood community leaders](#) are local leaders in every part of the state bringing together local stakeholders to increase awareness of and coordination among early childhood programs and services. Community leaders elevate the importance of early childhood and help their communities ensure that all children are safe, healthy, and successful learners.

Read [the Childhood Community Leader Dashboard](#) for an overview of community leader work and outcomes from September – November 2024.

UPDATE! Child Care Relief Funds Public Dashboard

To learn more about how Child Care Relief Funds were distributed in Missouri, access [the Child Care Relief Funds Dashboard](#) on Early Connections.

dirt, insects, spiders, and rodents or other pests.

For more information about this requirement, review [the licensing rules](#) and [the sample Provider Policy Manual](#).

CLOSING SOON! 2025 Conference on the Young Years Registration



Registration for the 52nd Annual Conference on the Young Years (CYY) will be closing on February 12, 2025. CYY will be held March 6-8, 2025, at the Tan-Tar-A Conference Center in Osage Beach, Missouri.

If capacity is reached prior to February 12, 2025, registration may close early.

Learn more about the conference and register to attend on [the CYY webpage](#).

Monthly MOPD Quick Tip

A new resource has been developed to explain the Individual Training Requests feature within the MOPD System. If you completed a training not listed in the MOPD System, you may submit an Individual Training Request to be considered for approval.

Reviews are based on criteria described on [the Individual Training Request Tip Sheet](#) and may take up to 30 days for a review to be completed.

Questions? Contact MOPD@dese.mo.gov.

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships in order to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.



Photo Credit: Rolla Public Schools

The Rolla Board of Education recently announced a partnership with the Phelps County Community Foundation and with Four Rivers Community Health.

The partnership with the Phelps County Community Foundation (PCCF) will support the expansion of early childhood programming at Rolla Public Schools. This effort has allowed the district to purchase a facility, that once renovated, will house all early childhood programming. Currently, the program is split between all three elementary schools within the district.

“Having a centralized location and a space specifically designed for our littlest learners will allow for a more robust educational experience for our PUPS,” said Early Childhood Director Laura Brown. “We will also be positioned to better manage and pool our resources in a single location.”

The Phelps County Community Foundation has committed to a total donation of \$1,950,000 to cover the purchase of the property while also seeking donations to match a \$250,000 grant through the Chymiak Family Foundation. Through this partnership, the early childhood program can expand from half-day classes to full-day classes.

Also, through a collaboration with Four Rivers Community Health, the new early childhood facility will house a fully equipped medical clinic to provide comprehensive health and dental services to approximately 1,200 unique patients annually. “This project is a true testament to the collaborative spirit of the Rolla community,” Dr. Dare, R31 Superintendent said. “The impact of the joint effort between the Phelps County Community Foundation and Four Rivers in service to the Rolla School District and community is going to be significant and long-lived.”

Join us for the next OOC Stakeholder webinar on **Tuesday, February 25, 2025**, from noon to 12:45 p.m. to learn more and ask questions. You can [access the webinar](#) in a Google Chrome or Safari web browser. Do not view in Internet Explorer. We hope you can participate!

A [recording](#) and [the PowerPoint slides](#) from the January 2025 webinar are available in case you were unable to attend and wish to hear the information.

The [PDG B-5 dashboard](#) is also updated monthly. This dashboard provides an at-a-glance look at priority areas, budget status, and key accomplishments.

For questions about the stakeholder webinar series, or suggestions for topics in future webinars, email us at Childhood@dese.mo.gov.

Archived Editions of Childhood Connections

[Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.](#)

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